

Garden Report Fall 2008

New Projects

The most visible project was the ongoing construction of the outdoor classroom/shade house. With the help of local carpenter and neighbor Tim Steele, Professor John Elder, Beekeeper Kirk Webster, Bill McKibben and the student interns the very large roof beams were put into place. With the help of community volunteers John Derick, Ashar Nelson and fine design work by Tim the sheathing and roofing were finished. Thanks also to Luther Tenny and Acker Excavating for completing the new path from Bicentennial Way to the garden.

The Organic Garden in the News

A photo of the Organic Garden appeared in "Green Campus" a Sierra Club magazine as part of an article on environmental initiatives in higher education.

Internships

As a result of the generous support of alumni-sponsored internships and earned income from the garden's produce sales, three students participated in the College Organic Garden this summer as full-time interns (Corinne Almquist '09, Htar Htar Yu '08.5, Hannah Rommer '08.5). An additional, full-time intern (Alison Holley '12), was funded by a gift from the Mittelman Internship.

Production Garden

In a summer where the weather switched from near drought to unceasing rain and back again to near drought the garden produced a bumper crop of vegetables, herbs and flowers. The garden again expanded to include several new planting areas. Along with sales of produce to Dining Services we supplied food to Otter Creek Bakery, American Flatbread, the Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op, and the Grapevine Grille. The interns also donated many crops to the Addison County Food shelf and the Burmese refugee community in Winooski. Our honey harvest was the best ever-92 pounds. Thanks so much to Addison County beekeepers Ross Conrad and Kirk Webster for sharing their incredible skills and insights with us. Our large planting of yellow sweet clover around the periphery of the garden helped our honeybees produce the honey bounty plus all our insectary plantings gave our bees and the native pollinators ample food sources for the entire season.

Seed saving

After five years of the seed saving project we continue to have our favorites. "Corne de Bouc", "Green Zebra", Persimmon and "Black Krim tomatoes, "Coco" black beans, "Slenderette" green beans, and Speckled Troutback lettuce won taste tests year after year.. Many parents and alumni stopped at the garden last fall to collect seeds for their own gardens. If you are interested in receiving seeds from the Organic Garden, please email us at: mcog@middelbury.edu

Gardeners in the Community

In October several member of MCOG were part of a larger group of students that organized a

local foods symposium on campus. The Organic Garden contributed squash, potatoes, greens and onions to one of the local food meals in the Atwater Dining Hall.

Slow Food International chose four MCOG members: Rosalind Chaplin, Emily May, Jon Campbell and Dan Kane to be student representatives to the Terra Madre Conference in Turin, Italy. As a direct result of work done by Middlebury students at the 2006 Terra Madre conference the 2008 conference had a larger focus for young delegates. The Middlebury students were able to exchange ideas with farmers, chefs, social activists and other students from all over the world.

Reunion 2008

This reunion marked the second annual tour of the garden for alumni. This year's tour was attended by over forty alumni. Sophie Esser (0'3.5) attended the reunion and shared her experiences organizing the original children's garden program.

Faculty at the garden

Classes from the English, Religion, Geography, Teacher Ed and Dance departments were held at the garden in spring and fall of 2008. During the summer a student intern working with Professor Helen Young did an inventory of our insectary plants and which pollinators and beneficial insects they were attracting. Senior Philip Picotte working through the Geography Department completed the initial mapping of the garden and its uniquely shaped sub sections. Four students in Helen Young's Plant Biology Course participated in a fall semester research project at the garden. They collected seeds from different garden crops and tested them for germination. They also evaluated germination of the seeds we've been saving over the past five years. Based on a review of the scientific literature they made recommendations about how to control soil borne plant diseases and suggested companion crops to attract insect pollinators.

Visitors to the garden in 2008.

Student gardeners from Green Mountain College, St. Lawrence University, Hamilton College and Earlham College visited the organic garden. A youth group from the Keewayden summer program visited the garden in late spring. Students from the North Branch Independent Elementary School made two visits to the garden this summer.

Faculty and staff from Plattsburgh State College, Green Mountain College, Emory University and St. Lawrence University visited the garden.

We also had a visit from Eric Schlosser, author of Fast Food Nation.

The Organic Garden as a Resource to other colleges and universities

Each year students and faculty from other colleges and universities inquire about the Middlebury College Organic Garden. They consistently ask for information that will help them create or sustain their own college gardens. This year I received inquiries from Lewis and Clark College, Carleton College, Colgate University, Colby College, Mount Holyoke College, Bucknell University, Ohio State University, Pacific Lutheran University, Western State College (CO) and Stanford University.

Advisor Activities

In October I was asked to work with Middlebury College students attending the Synergy Retreat in Starksboro, VT. These groups take on community issues based on the model used by community organizer and social activist Van Jones. One of the groups I worked with began plans for a community garden in Middlebury. They were able to obtain use of a privately owned parcel in Middlebury for a community garden and are working with private business and community organizations to get the garden going this spring.